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ABSTRACT

Project Catch-Up is an ESEA Title I reading and math laboratory project for kindergarten through sixth-grade students, operating in Southern California's Newport-Mesa Unified School District. Its philosophy is that students having difficulty in reading and math can catch up with other students. Teachers take responsibility for the achievement gains of 18 low-achieving elementary students, and aides for the gains of 10 low-achieving elementary students. Staff members are free to use whatever techniques they choose and to purchase instructional materials, which they match to clearly defined objectives. Teachers and aides plan a variety of activities for each child focused on two or three specific skills that the child needs to work on. It is recommended that Project Catch-Up should be selected for a particular school district only if it can meet project requirements in the areas of instruction, management, and communication, and organization, and if resources in the following areas are available: (1) personnel, (2) material/equipment, and, (3) facilities. Project Catch-Up is one of six projects which have been selected by the U.S. Office of Education as unusually successful for teaching reading and/or math to underachieving students in low-income areas. (Author/AM)

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Project Catch-Up

Analysis and Selection Kit

ED129948

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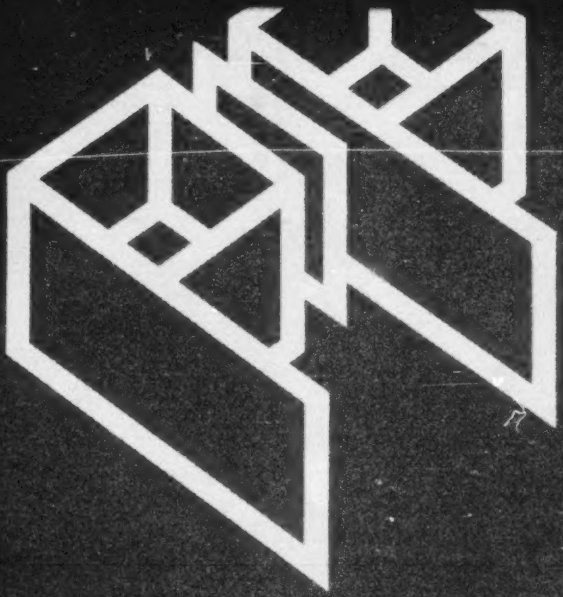
Catch-Up is a project for students having difficulty in reading and math. Students leave their regular classrooms to participate.

Students	Kindergarten through sixth-grade students participate in Catch-Up. Students are nominated by their classroom teachers, and final selections are made in consultations between classroom and project teachers.
Staff	A half-time project director and secretary are needed for Catch-Up. Each Catch-Up lab has three teachers (one of whom is designated lead teacher), a paraprofessional aide, and volunteer parent aides.
Student/Staff Ratio	Staff members generally work with three students at a time, but they may have up to five. Each teacher in Catch-Up takes personal responsibility for the achievement of 18 students during the year, and each aide for 10 students.
Facilities	Each Catch-Up lab requires one classroom, typically located in the project school. The project director needs an office at the district administrative center.
Instruction	Catch-Up teachers and aides plan a variety of activities for each child focused on two or three specific skills that child needs to work on. Children work individually as the staff move about the room giving help where needed. A wide variety of materials is made available to meet whatever needs the students have.
Training	Catch-Up staff attend a two-week training workshop before the lab opens and monthly in-service meetings.
Scheduling	Project staff and classroom teachers jointly schedule students' attendance in the labs for daily 20- to 60-minute sessions. Attendance is planned to avoid conflict with important events in the students' regular classrooms.



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Catch-Up is one of six projects selected as unusually successful for teaching reading and/or mathematics to underachieving students in low-income areas. Project Information Packages including detailed guidelines for installing and operating these projects are available from the U.S. Office of Education to qualifying school districts.

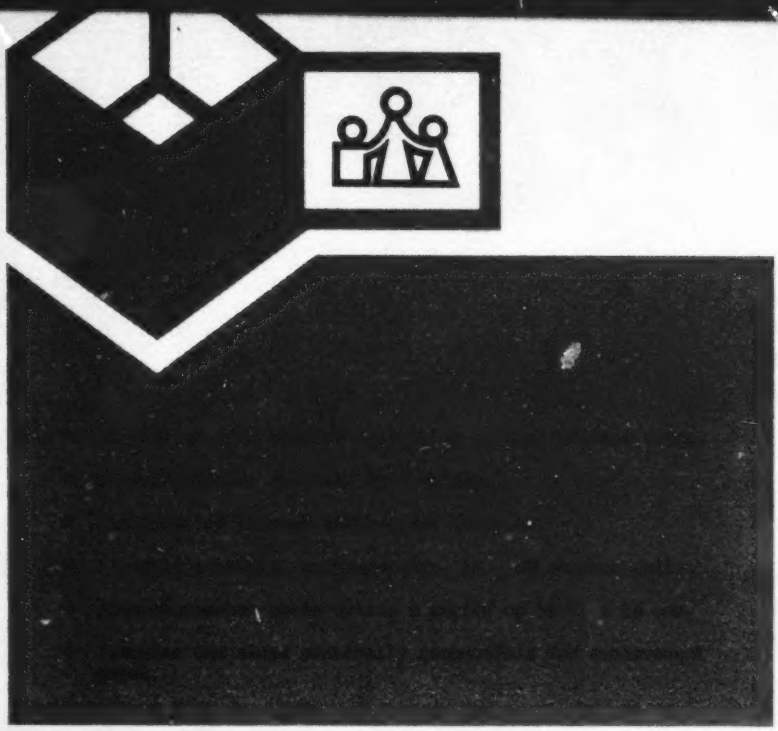
Al jumps off the green kangaroo-shaped rocking chair in the Project Catch-Up laboratory, eager to tackle today's problem-- learning the "L" sound. He rubs a patch in a learning kit booklet that looks and smells like a lemon and then practices printing. He does a teaching machine lesson for "L" and attempts a test criterion reading. Finally he joins other students in Spin-a-Sound game with one of the teachers, and he wins. On his way out of the lab, he pins his practice sheet on his own rocket-shaped progress chart and glances at a five-foot Pinocchio painted on the wall, emblazoned with the slogan, "I Did It."

Catch-Up is a reading and math laboratory project for kindergarten through sixth-grade students. It features highly qualified teachers and aides who teach mornings only in an attractive, well-equipped laboratory using an eclectic approach.

The philosophy of Project Catch-Up is that students with special needs can catch up with other students. Teachers take responsibility for the achievement gains of 18 low-achieving elementary students in reading and math, and aides for the gains of 10. Staff members are free to use whatever techniques they choose and to purchase instructional materials, which they match to clearly defined objectives. They schedule time and activities flexibly to meet identified student needs. The atmosphere of the labs is free; students are encouraged to choose activities from among alternatives. The project operates mornings only, when students and teachers are fresh. There is one well-equipped, gaily decorated laboratory within each school.

Project Origin

Project Catch-Up was developed by local school personnel as an ESEA Title I project and has operated since 1966 in southern California's Newport-Mesa Unified School District, a large and generally prosperous area with pockets of poverty. The project capitalizes on the availability of qualified, part-time staff and the proximity of publishers' representatives. Catch-Up has been replicated in several other school districts across the country.



Catch-Up provides supplementary instruction for kindergarten through sixth-grade students who are behind in math and reading. The project can be limited to a narrower grade range, depending on the needs of the district.

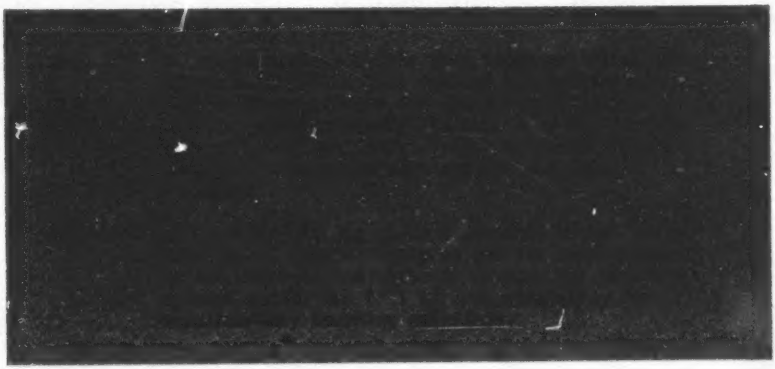
Catch-Up uses an eclectic, individualized approach emphasizing personal attention, careful diagnosis, and a wide variety of learning methods and materials.

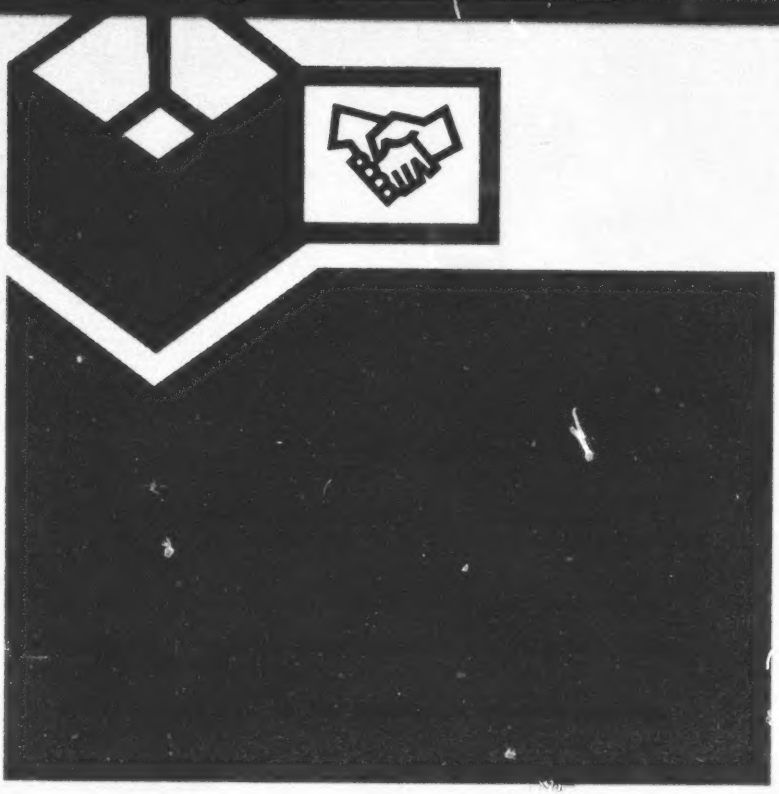
Selecting and scheduling Catch-Up students must be done individually between the project teacher and the regular teacher, based on each child's needs and preferences. Teachers and aides must choose the children they will work with for the entire year. Final selection and scheduling don't occur until four weeks after the school year begins; although the lag may seem inefficient, discussions during this time establish a working relationship between regular teachers and project staff.

activity to another guided by the teacher and their activity folders. They work alone or in pairs on teaching machines and tests, and in small groups on games and teacher-directed activities. How long they spend each day on reading and math and the approaches staff members use are determined entirely by student needs as identified on criterion-referenced tests. Work is made easy enough so the child can constantly succeed.

Although the lab is well equipped with commercial materials, teachers and aides are always on the lookout for games and other stimulating items to meet particular student needs. They have a materials budget of $18 allocated yearly for each child. The student is never blocked from pursuing a skill until he has mastered it; teachers provide encouragement and as many activities as necessary to accomplish this goal.

Students' needs are determined by taking commercial tests. They take placement exams such as those used with programmed readers and criterion-referenced tests to determine specific skill deficiencies. The testing is interspersed with learning. When a teacher has identified two or three specific skills a child needs, he or she assigns several activities designed to teach those skills.





The Catch-Up management style is very light-handed. The project director acts primarily as a troubleshooter, so the teachers are free to spend their time on instruction.

The project director is not an instructional supervisor; he or she directs the lab through the lead teacher. The director does not substitute teach, require written lesson plans, or expect teachers to take time from instruction for record keeping.

A district-level administrator, the project director must be responsive and action-oriented. He or she acts quickly when problems arise. The director stays in daily phone contact with teachers and aides, responds quickly with supportive memos to teacher requests and comments, and approves materials orders daily.

help solve a problem. Lead teachers meet with the project director once a month to discuss what is happening in the laboratories.

Within the lab, teachers and aides share equipment and materials without needing formal systems. They often combine their students on game day, but usually work with their own groups. Instructional aides have a role very similar to the teacher's. They are usually taking courses to advance on the career ladder. Aides teach; they do not run mimeograph machines or make bulletin boards for the teachers.

Project staff's daily, informal contacts with regular teachers are designed both to assure that learning in the laboratory supplements activities in the regular classroom and to encourage regular teachers to notice the slower students' improving abilities.

Project staff members encourage parents to join the school and district level parent advisory boards by sponsoring luncheons and offering babysitting services. The parents tell project staff what they want for their children. Teachers involve parents in learning by visiting homes, sending home suggestions for learning games, and inviting parents to visit and help with the project.

A month-long experimentation program is run during the summer.

	Number	Total Cost
ANNUAL COSTS		
Personnel		
Project Director	.5	[2]
Secretary to Project Director	.5	[2]
Lead Teacher	3.0	
Teacher	6.0	
Instructional Aides	3.0	
Facilities		
Project Director Office	1	
Classrooms	3	
Materials/Equipment		
Additions, Replacement, Repairs Teachers' Discretionary Fund		3,500.00
Summer Experimentation Fund (10% of annual budget)		
Total Estimated Annual Cost		
ADDITIONAL START-UP COSTS		
Personnel		
Project Director (March-August one-half time)		
Lead Teacher (May-June one-half time)		
Training stipend for staff		
Materials/Equipment		19,500.00 [3]
Total Estimated Additional Start-up Cost		

[1] See page 9 of the Project Selection Guide.

[2] As additional labs are added, this cost should be divided among them.

[3] This figure represents a general approximation. Sites where funds were available have spent up to $12,000 for each lab.

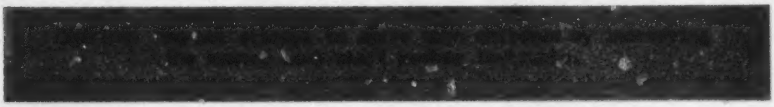
Project director and secretary (both half-time)

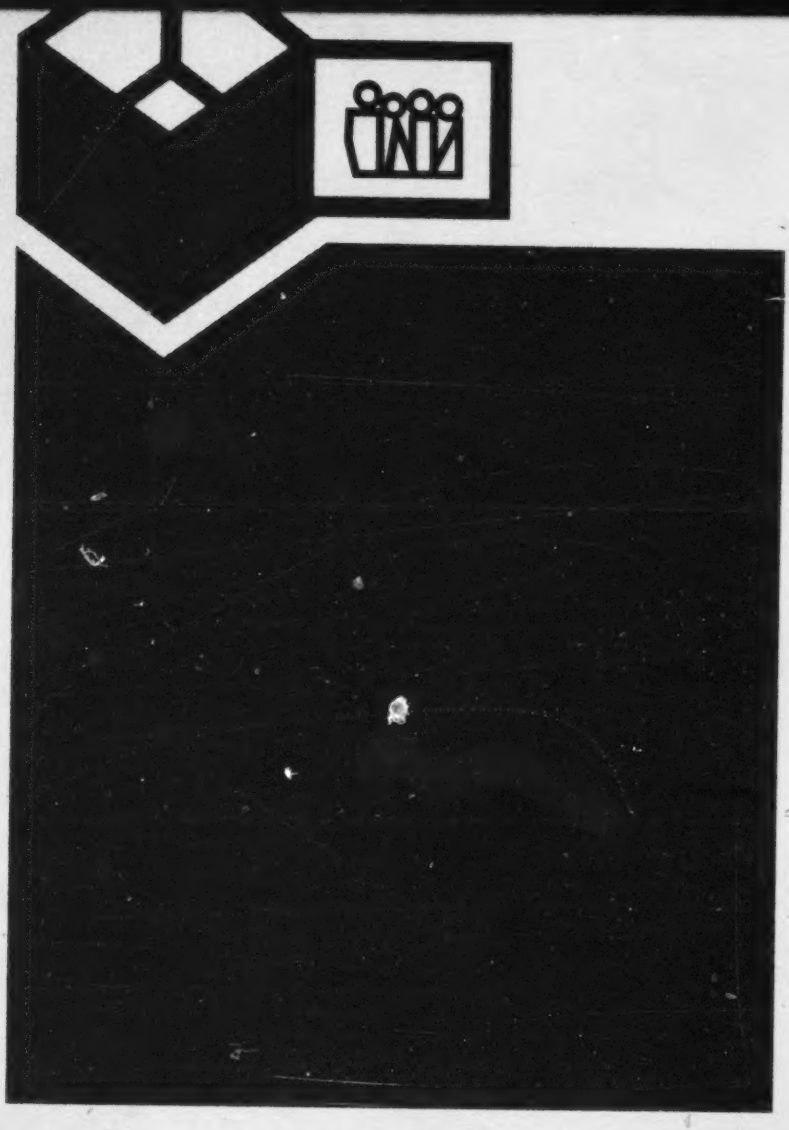
- Instructional staff
  - Lead teacher
  - Team teachers
  - Instructional aides
- 64 children served each year in typical lab

Catch-Up requires a half-time project director and secretary to perform the administrative tasks associated with the projects. One team, headed by a lead teacher, is required for each Catch-Up lab.

Each Catch-Up teacher assumes personal responsibility for the progress of 18 students, and each aide for 10. In the lab, staff share instructional materials freely without any formal check-out systems. Aides in Catch-Up teach and are not assigned clerical duties such as record keeping and bulletin board display preparation. At any one time, a staff member will usually work with no more than five students in the lab.

A typical Catch-Up lab, as described above, serves 64 children with three teachers and one aide. However, smaller and larger projects have been successfully implemented. It would be possible, for instance, to have a Catch-Up lab staffed with only two teachers serving 36 children or one staffed with four teachers and one aide serving 82 children. The needs of particular schools in a district will determine the sizes of individual labs. Larger labs, however, should be allotted two connecting, or at least adjacent, classrooms to avoid crowding.





Catch-Up's success depends upon having an action-oriented director who must be willing to give the staff unusual autonomy and effective administrative support. Correspondingly, Catch-Up teachers and aides must be able to function with unusual autonomy.

Because Catch-Up requires half-time teachers (four hours per day) not employed elsewhere, the setting of the project is especially important. The originating site is located in a densely populated urban area. Many expert teachers who live there find it economically feasible and desirable to seek half-time employment. This minimizes the danger that they will abandon the project for a full-time job.

The originating site also offers a population of well-educated teachers who have team-taught, have used programmed reading, and are familiar enough with Catch-Up teaching techniques that they don't require much training. Unless a district has a pool of people available who have worked with such techniques, the project is not likely to work.

Catch-Up Project Director

Catch-Up requires a capable director, usually the director of federal projects or the district reading coordinator. The director must be sufficiently established in the district to carry out the project's sometimes unorthodox demands. Just as importantly, he or she must be in a position to identify potential teachers from among personal contacts.

The director must be willing to give the staff unusual autonomy and effective administrative support. He or she must be inventive, politically savvy, and action-oriented; Catch-Up cannot operate in a "wait-and-see" climate.

friend of the staff. He or she keeps track of the materials budget, trains and works with aides, and provides liaison with the project director.

Lead teachers demonstrate teaching techniques during training and are occasionally sent by the project director to help solve problems in neighboring laboratories. They are skilled at greeting visitors, answering questions, and keeping in touch with the principal.

The lead teacher is more instructor than administrator; the project director does not double as lead teacher.

Catch-Up Teachers

Teachers have more responsibility than aides in ordering equipment and materials and directing individual children's learning and testing. Each teacher is personally responsible for the achievement gains of 18 students. This is not a group responsibility. It is this responsibility that orients teachers to strive to meet students' needs.

Teachers must already be capable and experienced instructors, able to capitalize on the flexibility offered by Project Catch-Up's design in a positive, participatory style. All of them must create an attitude of confidence in students while respecting their culture or ethnic background. Both teachers and aides master the use of a wide variety of new teaching materials and involve parents and regular classroom teachers in the children's progress. They are skilled at teaching both reading and math, and do not specialize in just one. They often volunteer time for planning.

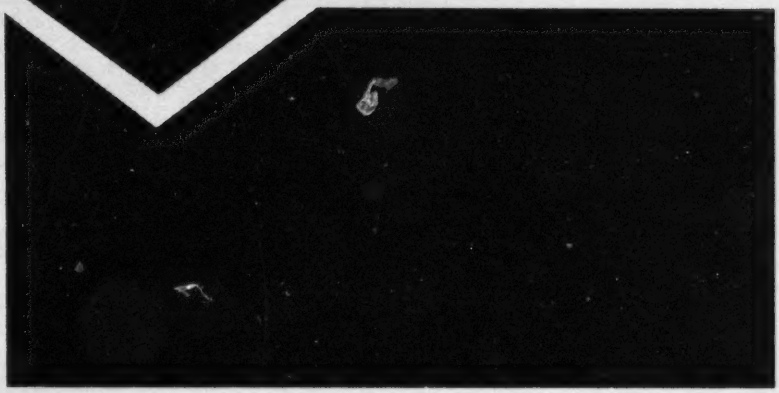
munity served by the project, and therefore aides often provide project-community liaison. Though lacking credentials when they begin in the project, aides have many teaching skills and assume the role of teaching their own group of 10 students. They do not perform clerical tasks for teachers; the project director encourages them to earn credentials and become project teachers.

Aides at Project Catch-Up in the originating site had a special role in helping students who spoke little English. One teacher who worked with Spanish-speaking children was certified to teach in South America; though qualified, she was not certified in California. Another aide was a Chicano graduate student in psychology, and a third was a mother raised in South America who had not finished high school but had proved her exceptional skills as a parent aide.

Instructional aides should be chosen from among community members who are interested in teaching and have a great deal of potential, but who do not yet have the formal preparation to be teachers. Aide selection should be adapted to local needs so that people who show potential can work gradually into a teaching role.

Catch-Up Parent Aides

Volunteer parent aides, recruited by teachers, are especially sensitive to students who are hesitant and shy and help younger children with practical needs. Parent aides who show special promise are encouraged to move into instructional aide positions.



Each Catch-Up lab contains a wide variety of highly motivational materials and equipment, providing alternatives in learning materials for each skill a child needs to learn. A core of commercial materials, described in the PIP, is made available from the onset of training. They range from programmed workbooks and criterion-referenced tests to Cyclo-Teachers, Computer-Tutors, and card games. Teachers are constantly on the lookout for new materials to meet specific student needs, on which they spend their $225 budget. They submit orders often and key materials to instructional objectives throughout the year. All materials are used only for the project.

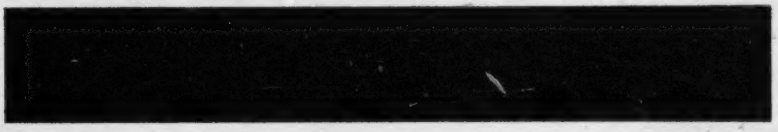
About $6,500 provides one lab with the recommended core equipment and materials. The project director orders the core items in the spring so they will be available for training in August.

Teachers and aides have their own budget for materials needed to meet individual students' needs.

The bright, nontraditional environment of a Catch-Up lab is vital to the project. The director must secure a large, comfortable classroom or temporary building available all day for the entire year. Staff must, on a limited budget, be able to decorate it gaily and imaginatively; different from other classrooms, it is a special place for students to come. The lab is close enough to the classroom to be considered part of the school, but is not near a stigmatized area such as a kindergarten might be for older children.

The project director secures a room with standard classroom furniture and adds ample cabinets, round tables, comfortable chairs, and area rugs. He or she removes most traditional student desks and cast-off furnishings; those remaining are brightly painted or modified.

The project director's fully equipped office is in the district office building, not the school. This helps establish the director's position as an administrator.



for the PIP is approved, the director will have many planning tasks to complete before training and instruction begin in the fall. The director's role is extremely important. The same person should carry out initial tasks and subsequent troubleshooting. He or she should start in March on a half-time basis to carry out the required management tasks within the time frame shown on the chart facing this page.

The project director:

[redacted]

2. orients personnel of tentatively identified schools and other relevent administrators in the district.

[redacted]

4. recruits and interviews prospective staff.

[redacted]

6. surveys furniture, materials, and equipment.

[redacted]

8. orders necessary lab furniture, core materials, and equipment.

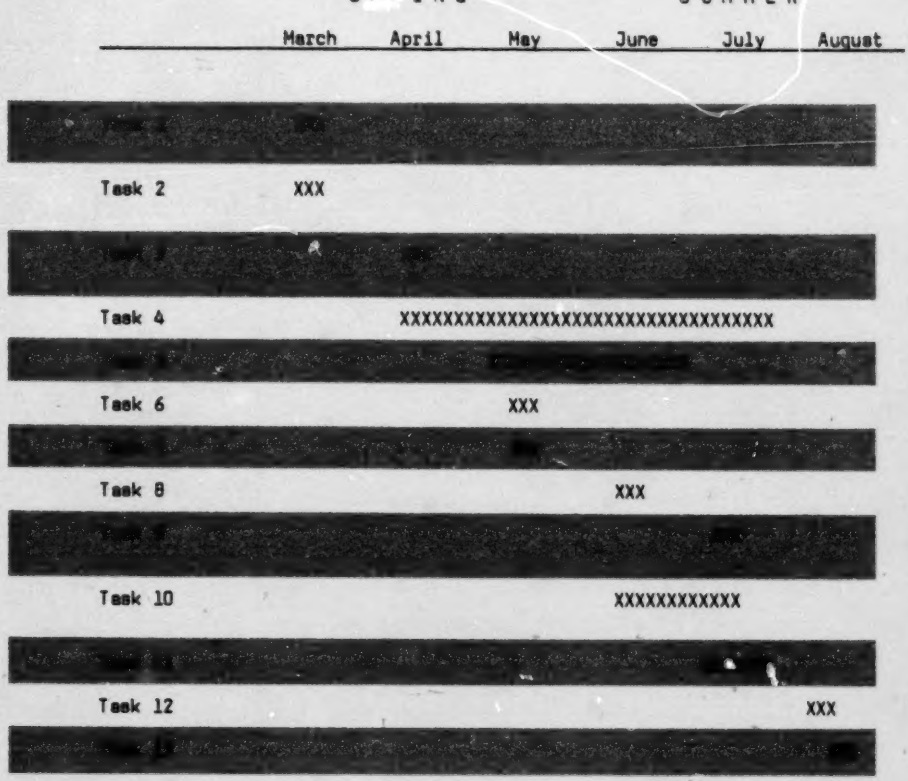
[redacted]

10. monitors preparation of lab for training and student instruction.

[redacted]

12. plans start-up training workshop and arranges for consultants.

[redacted]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INTENTION

Select Project Catch-Up only if your school district can meet the following project requirements:

INSTRUCTION

- Teacher or aide selects activities to meet student needs.
- Flexible schedule, mornings only, 20-60 minutes daily.
- Teachers and aides personally responsible for achievement gains.

MANAGEMENT/COMMUNICATION

- Responsive, action-oriented administration.
- Daily contact between project and regular teachers.
- Teachers and aides share equipment and materials as an informal team.

ORGANIZATION

- Project serves 36-246 students.
- There are 18 students per teacher and 10 per aide.

CAPABILITY

Select Catch-Up only if

The following resources are available:

PERSONNEL

- District-level, action-oriented administrator.
- Capable, experienced half-time teachers willing to volunteer extra time.
- Aides who play a similar role to the teachers'.

MATERIALS/EQUIPMENT

- Alternative materials keyed to each skill.
- A $225 materials budget for each teacher.
- Core materials available before September implementation.

FACILITIES

- An attractive lab exclusively for Catch-Up.
- Project director's office.

You can meet the schedule for getting started:

- Project director starts in March.
- Staff recruited in May.
- Materials/equipment ordered in May.
- All staff hired by July.
- Staff trained in August.

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Prepared by RMC Research Corporation

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